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Neligan, W.C.

Ancient Glass Beads and Cylinders

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AN ACCOUNT

OF

ANCIENT GLASS BEADS

AND

CYLINDERS,

FOUND ON THE STRAND OF

DUNWORLEY BAY, CO. CORK,

BEING A PAPER READ BEFORE THE CORK CUVIERIAN SOCIETY,

WITH ADDITIONAL REMARKS,

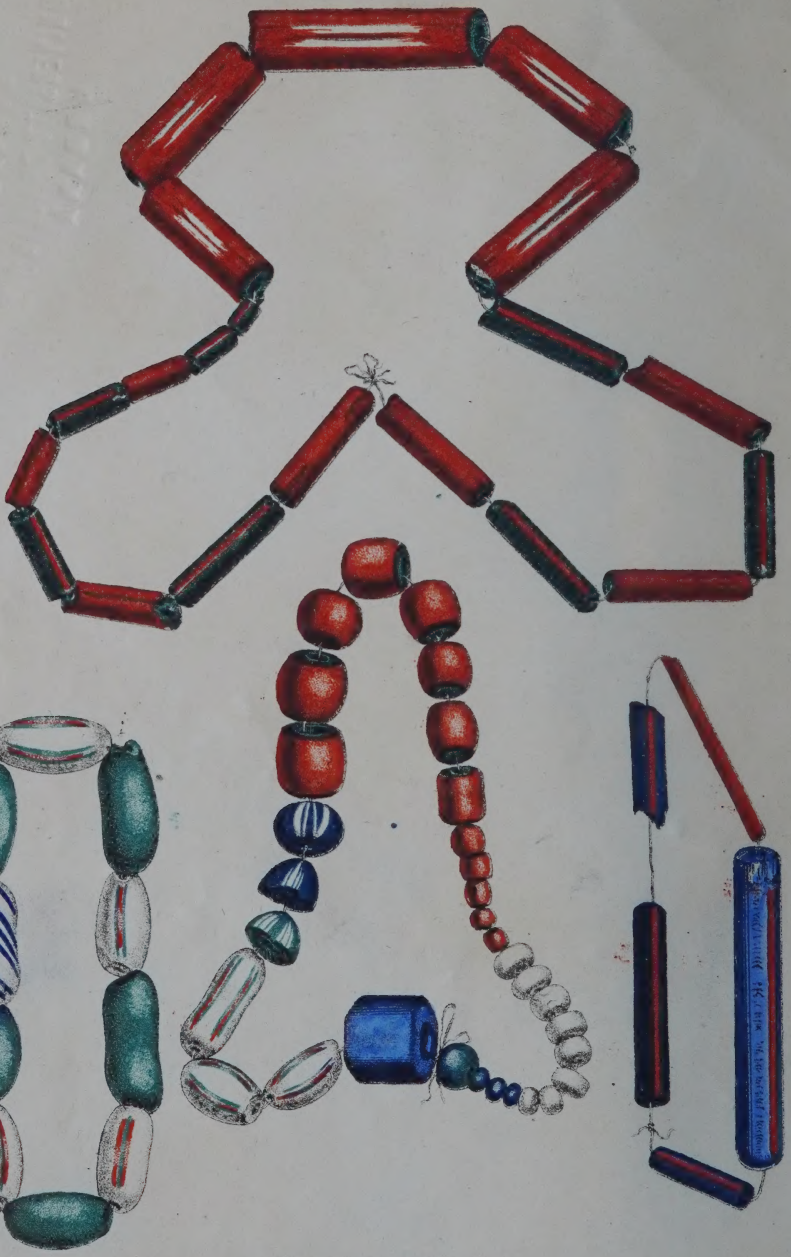
BY THE

REV. WILLIAM C. NELIGAN, LL.D.,

RECTOR AND VICAR OF ST. MARY SHANDON.

PRINTED FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION ONLY AMONG A FEW ANTIQUARIAN FRIENDS.

1858.



ANCIENT BEADS

Discovered on the Strand at Dunworley Bay, Co. Cork.

BY REVᵈ DR NELIGAN.

Moore Lith. Cork.

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The following paper was got up in great haste, and was written "*currente calamo*," as it was only intended to have been spoken "*currente linguâ*," in a mere ordinary or running conversation, among a few antiquarian friends.

Of course it possesses many faults, and perhaps ought not to have been printed,—but as it is intended only for a very limited private circulation, I feel confident its imperfections will be kindly overlooked. I might add that it is more for the plate than the letter press, that I now present it to my friends.

March, 1858.

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EXTRACT FROM THE MONTHLY PROCEEDINGS OF THE CORK CUVIERIAN SOCIETY.

Wednesday Evening, December 2, 1857.

GRAHAM TORBUCK, Esq., IN THE CHAIR.

Dr. Neligan showed us a large number of beads, collected at Dunworly Bay, concerning which he read a short paper. On a few of them were Inscriptions. During the past 50 years they have been found in the same locality. Mr. Vaux, of the British Museum, to whom some of them were sent, gives his opinion, that they were of the 14th and 15th century, and that the inscriptions are Arabic, of the Cufic character. They probably formed part of the cargo of a foreign vessel, wrecked in that place. He produced from the same locality, a tusk of ivory, (probably of the Walrus,) and an ancient conical lead or pewter vessel, much worn.—The thanks of the Society were voted to Dr. Neligan, for his interesting communication.

JOHN HUMPHRIES,

SEC.

DISCOVERY

OF

ANCIENT BEADS, &c.

HAVING been in the habit for several years back of resorting to a part of the Western Coast of this County for sea bathing, called Dunworly, I accidentally made the following curious and very interesting discovery:—About 12 or 14 years ago after bathing, I strolled along the rocks, and the tide being out, I came to a small cove or strand, where I stopped to gather a few shells, along with which I picked up also a couple of oval glass beads of a light blue colour. Every third or fourth day the tide being out, I picked up in the same place one or two more beads. On returning to Cork, however, I almost forgot the circumstance, and mislaid the beads. In different years after this, I picked up in the same

place, from time to time, beads of a similar description, and some glass cylinders, coated with a reddish coloured paint or paste, many having three white or greyish longitudinal stripes. At first view of the cylinders, I thought they were ends broken off the common clay tobacco pipes, covered with red sealing wax for the mouth, but on a closer inspection, seeing they were glass, I knew this could not be the case. The circumstance, however, again and again escaped my memory, and beads and cylinders were again mislaid. This time two years, however, being again at the same place, and picking up ten or a dozen beads, with several red cylinders, I determined (particularly as the beads presented somewhat of an antiquated appearance) to show them to some of my antiquarian brethren in Cork.

Accordingly before setting out this year, I remembered my beads, which I placed as well as some of the cylinders, for safe keeping on a string, and showed them to John Lindsay, Esq., the learned author of various useful and valuable works on Coins, Antiquities, &c. After inspecting them, Mr. Lindsay stated that he thought the beads were rather antique, but that the cylinders were not quite so old; on the whole, however, he thought the beads well

worth looking after, and recommended a further search. On my arrival therefore at Dunworly this year, in the month of August, I took up my abode as usual, at Sea Court, the hospitable mansion of Mrs. Longfield, situated about a mile from Dunworly, and every day after my bath, rambled on the beach in search of beads, and succeeded almost every day, in securing a few blue beads, and red cylinders, with occasionally a black cylinder, with red stripes, and now and then a blue cylinder, much worn and detrited, with red stripes. One day I picked up a white bead with red and blue stripes, and of the same oval shape as most of the blue beads previously found. The finding of this, the colours of which were somewhat brilliant, as well as the finding of the different coloured cylinders, spurred me on to more vigorous exertions, and I immediately set some two dozen boys and girls to work; these I kept employed every day at low tide, for about two months, paying each so much a piece for beads and cylinders produced. The result of this arrangement was as follows, viz: over six hundred beads of the light blue colour, of various sizes, many being round, several of these were broken, but being perforated, I strung all together. There were also numerous fragments or chips of the blue beads, forty four

white beads, with three sets of three stripes, the centre red, and the two outer stripes blue, and others exactly vice versa, viz. the centre stripe blue, and the outer ones red, three white beads with four single stripes alternately of red and blue, one white bead with alternate stripes, four in number, of brown and blue, with a few fragments of each, and thirteen red beads, nearly all of various sizes. On inspection, the red beads will be found to correspond with the cylinders of the same colour; if there is any difference, it is that some cylinders are striped, while none of the same coloured beads have stripes. There was also one large light blue bead (the only one which looks like stone) of an hexagonal form. (See Plate.)

It was amusing to see my corps of explorers at work. They watched the receding tide, scraped the gravel, looked under the rocks, and turned over large stones in their search. One scene in particular I never will forget. It occurred after a storm, the waves were not exactly "mountain high," but were certainly running to the height of some 12 or 14 feet. The spot was under a high cliff called Coarswee, or the Yellow Cliff, (it is marked "Crossboy" in the Ordnance Map of Dunworly Bay.) Here about twenty boys and girls were collected searching for beads; one

boy had a shovel, scraping the sand or rather gravel, (for the beads were scarcely ever found except in fine gravel, the stones of which were about their own size, never in sand.) This boy occasionally turned up a blue bead, but on one occasion a white one with stripes presented itself, and these being so very much scarcer than the blue, I usually paid a double price for. Unfortunately however for my hero of the shovel, the prize was seen by more eyes than his, and an immediate rush to the spot took place, before he could lay hands on the coveted object. Observing the approaching crowd, he flung himself flat on the strand, covering the bead as well as he could, with his body, while the throng gathered round, some falling over him, some trying to get under him or push him aside, some few scampering off from a leviathan wave that was fast approaching. Meanwhile on came the wave, and before those who were on all-fours, scrambling for the painted bauble, could well get out of the way, they were fairly soused in the briny sea, which having made its bow, majestically and gracefully retired, doing no further damage than giving them a good ducking.

Having now gone so far with my story, I beg to call particular attention to the blue cylinders. One morning when proceeding to see how my

band of explorers were going on, one of the girls produced a few beads, red cylinders, and a very perfect blue one, with red stripes, (the one given in the lithograph, which see.) The sun was shining in full splendour, as she held up the blue cylinder in her hand, and I thought I perceived something like letters of some kind on it, but at the moment they appeared so very minute, that I was not quite certain, and I therefore laid it by till I got back to Sea Court. On examining it there, I at first fancied it might have been only scraped by contact with rocks or stones, but on looking at it with a magnifying glass, I at once discovered characters of some kind, but with which I was wholy unacquainted, they however appeared afterwards so plainly to the naked eye, that I wondered I ever doubted they were letters. Having fully satisfied myself that the cylinder contained an inscription of some kind, I offered largely and liberally for another specimen, but alas! only few of the more perfect blue cylinders were found. Three only of the full or usual length, one without any symptoms of inscription, one most provokingly detrited in the very spot, where there evidently had been letters, showing only that it once bore some inscription ; tracings of letters being still perceptible on it ; and two fragments, each having tracings of two or three

letters. Something like an inscription appears also on one or two of the red and black cylinders, but only in single strokes, and may have been the effect of scraping or rubbing against the sharp edged rocks or stones.

I might here perhaps be asked to offer some conjectures as to the origin, date, antiquity, or use &c. of these beads and cylinders; but I wish it distinctly to be understood that I venture no opinion of my own on these subjects; neither would I offer any suggestion as to the inscription, the characters of which I do not profess to understand. I would far prefer leaving such conjectures to those who are better skilled in matters of antiquity, and much more competent to give opinions on them than I am. I shall merely state what I have done, with regard to obtaining a few such opinions from some of the ablest antiquaries of the day. On my return to Cork from Dunworly, I exhibited the entire collection to Mr. Sainthill, Counsellor Lindsay, Mr. Windele, Mr. Caulfield, and others. Various opinions of course were expressed. Mr. Lindsay was now convinced that the beads and cylinders were of the same date, and suggested that they might have been intended for devotional purposes in Timoleague Abbey, the building of which was commenced A.D. 1350, and which in a straight

line lies only about four miles from the spot in which they were found. At the same time he thought they might have ranged from any period between 1350 to 1550. He also suggested that if they were for such devotional uses, the cylinders might have been intended for decades ; he was, however, firmly persuaded that they were of Eastern origin. One friend thought they might be Anglo Saxon, another considered them Egyptian, and the inscription he thought might be Coptic. Another thought them of Pagan origin, and said the blue glass was very similar to that of the Scarabæi, usually found deposited in Egyptian Mummies ; one or two friends suggested their being Venetian, another that they were for talismans or amulets. All however agreed in saying they were very curious, and well worth further investigation. On the united recommendation of these kind friends, I accordingly sent drawings, with a brief description of the beads and cylinders, to Lord Londesborough, J. Y. Akerman, Esq. F.S.A. and Secretary to the Society of Antiquaries in London, C. Roach Smith, Esq., and also to W. S. W. Vaux, Esq., of the British Museum. To the latter I enclosed some impressions of the inscription in wax, as suggested by C. R. Smith, Esq. All these gentlemen most kindly responded to my inquiries, and I now call

attention to their several replies, which are as follows :—

London, October 31, 1857.

My Dear Sir,

Many thanks for the curious account you have sent me—I cannot identify the Beads. They do not appear to be very ancient, but I should be better able to judge if I could see specimens. I have written no work on Beads, but there is a notice of mine with a plate in the xxxiv. vol. of the Archæologia.

Very truly your's,

(In haste.) J. Y. AKERMAN.

8, *Carlton House Terrace, October* 21*st.*

My Dear Sir,

I feel greatly obliged to you for your interesting communication respecting the Beads—to me also they have a most 'Coptic' appearance, how they found their way to the Coast of Ireland is most inexplicable. * * *

* * * * * * *

I have lately found in Yorkshire some most interesting Anglo-Saxon remains, they are very unusual in the district where they were found.

I remain,

Most sincerely your's,

LONDESBOROUGH.

The Rev. Dr. Neligan.

Temple Place, Strood-by Rochester, November 4th, 1857.

Dear Sir,

You need, at no time, hesitate to correspond with me in any matter in which you may conceive I could possibly be of use. In the present case, however, I do not see that I can. All that I can say is that the characters seem of some antiquity, as Mr. Lindsay conjectures, and that they bear an Eastern character. They will probably turn out to be not remotely ancient.

I think you cannot do better than send a cast to Mr. Vaux, (W. S. W. Vaux, Esq.) of the British Museum, an impression in wax, I think may do—and ask him what he can make of the characters.

Your discovery is interesting to me, and I shall be glad to hear that Mr. Vaux is able to give you a clue to the origin of the beads.

Believe me, Dear Sir,

Your's very truly,

C. ROACH SMITH.

The Rev. Dr. Neligan.

British Museum, November 17.

My Dear Sir,

Your glass Beads and inscriptions have excited much interest here. I have shewn them to Mr. Hawkins, and Mr. Franks, and they with me, have no doubt whatever, that they all came from the East, probably from Alexandria, or Syria.

The inscriptions are in Arabic, but I have not yet been able to make out the names or words on them, and I should be very glad, if, at any time, you could send impressions of any more which have any letters upon them. From the character of the writing, which is a late form of Cufic, they are probably of the date of the 14th or 15th centuries—not earlier—there is nothing about them to connect them with the Danish raths, except that so large a number may probably be accounted for by the shipwreck of some vessel, on board of which they may have been. This vessel may or may not have been a Danish one, but they are (if of the time of the Inscriptions) certainly not earlier than the period I have mentioned.

The more legends you can send me, the better chance there will be of their decypherment.

I am, my dear Sir,

Very faithfully your's

WM. S. W. VAUX.

The only observation I will make on the subject, is, that the colours of the stripes on the white beads seem to me very like the red and blue colours found in illuminated Missals and Mss. of the 13th, 14th, and 15th centuries, and also the coloured initials in early printed books. I have compared them with both, and found the colours almost precisely correspond. I must confess too that my friend who said the blue glass resembled

the Scarabæi of the Egyptian Mummy, was not much out in his comparison, for they bear a remarkable resemblance both in matter and colour. At first I thought the three stripes emblematical of the Trinity, but this idea I gave up, on picking up a few beads with four single stripes. I do not wish, however, as I before stated, to be thought as giving any opinion as to their date or origin. If I hazarded any opinion at all, I would be rather inclined to think they do not date farther back than 1600, from a circumstance which I shall bye and bye relate.

A great many of the red cylinders are nearly an inch in length, and it is probable all were once the same length, as the shorter ones appear to have been broken ; one I have mislaid was nearly two inches, or about the same length as the longest of the blue cylinders.

There is a good deal of difference in the circumference of both black and red cylinders, particularly in the latter, the blue being nearly alike in that respect. Indeed some of the red cylinders are so large as to admit into the bore, (for all as I before observed are perforated) one very delicate specimen, the only one found, measuring little more in circumference than an ordinary stalk of hay, or about the diameter of a quill from the wing of a bird of the sparrow size.

I have now mentioned all I well could, relative to this interesting *trouvaille*; it may be indeed, I have said too much. A few particulars as to the locality of the find, and matters connected therewith, may not be altogether unacceptable.

Dunworley, that is the Fort of Hurley, is in a straight line about 4 miles to the south west of Timoleague, celebrated for the ruins of its once famous Abbey, and about the same distance from Court Macsherry, between which and Timoleague are the ruins of another Abbey, viz:—Abbey Mahon. The country abounds in ancient raths, or forts, and subterraneous chambers and passages, all covered over with flags or flat stones. Several of these I have seen opened, and have sent parties with lighted candles far into the passages. Some of the raths indeed have an opening at the top, with a flight of stone steps going down. One called the Grange, is very extensive and fortified by three circumvallations. In these forts have occasionally been found stone hatchets, wooden methers or ancient drinking vessels; and in two I searched, I got the upper stone of an old Irish quern or handmill, now I believe in Mr. Windele's possession. The rath at Dunworly stands boldly over that part of the beach where the greater portion of beads lay. I say, the greater portion, for a few were

found at one or two other points, but all in the immediate vicinity of the fort. This fort was erected on a solid rock, forming a small peninsula in itself, underneath which is a natural tunnel through and through. Here too are some ruined Castles, and at about the distance of a mile, at Sea Court, lately stood a very perfect Druidical altar—alas! every stone broken in pieces to face an adjoining fence. Half a mile farther stood another of these altars, (also gone,) under which, two cups of pure gold were found some 30 or 40 years ago: they were offered for sale to a gentleman then residing in the neighbourhood, who thought they were brass, and he declining the purchase, they were eventually sold in Cork for 40 guineas, about one-eighth of their intrinsic value. Contiguous to the place of find is St. Anne's Well, marked on the ordnance map, which Smith in his history of Cork, says was much resorted to by the peasantry for devotional purposes on her festival. Could the beads have been intended to be sold for such uses to the frequenters of the well? Be this as it may the well is now scarcely known by name.

The sea view here is fine and extensive. The bay which is also called Dunworly bay, is however dangerous and rocky.—Should any large sailing

vessel get in, it would be difficult to find its way out. Indeed many shipwrecks have from time to time occurred here. And here at the western or what is called the Lihinoh side of the bay dwelt a good many years ago, a celebrated wrecker, who iu order to allure vessels inside the bay, used on stormy nights to tie a lantern to the horn of a cow, a well known trick of wreckers in former days. The cow having one leg strapped up, and being led round in a circle several times, presented the appearance, on a dark night, of the light of a ship at sea. The unsteady motion of the animal, owing to the leg being tied up, representing tolerably well the heavings of a ship from the agitation of the waves. This man, but too often succeeded in his nefarious calling,—and on one occasion he lured inside the bay a vessel having on board a valuable cargo of gold dust and ivory —only one of the hapless crew, a negro boy, was saved to tell the melancholy tale. He is reported to have stated that the Captain perceiving that he was trapped, and finding the vessel going to pieces, ordered the gold dust, which was in strong chests, to be lashed with chains to heavy pieces of cannon and sunk. The fact of the wreck is well known in Dunworly, and various attempts have been made to recover the precious cargo. On more than one occasion a steamer was seen

making fruitless attempts to fish up the treasure from the vasty deep. And I have myself seen some six years ago an attempt by a diver, with the usual apparatus.—The diver brought up pieces of lead and iron, &c., and on one occasion actually fastened a chain round one of the cannons, but it broke in the attempt to raise the heavy burden to which it was attached. So there still lies the ivory and gold. At least the greater part of both, for some few elephants teeth have been found on the rocks. At this side of the bay none of the more ancient beads were at all discovered; there is indeed not much strand there. But wishing to leave no place untried, I caused a search to be made there, and some 40 small ivory beads, and a few glass ones, all modern, when compared with the beads now under consideration were found,—these I produce as also an elephants tusk which turned up in the search. The more ancient beads were all got more to the Eastern side of the bay. And at this side also, a shipwreck of more remote date is reported to have occurred; viz: that of a Vessel which according to the tradition of the peasantry, had on board the beads and cylinders. The story was related to me by a peasant residing on that spot, of the name of M'Carthy, he said that about five or six hundred years ago—(we may however take 250 or even

300 years from his statement,) a Vessel was wrecked there, that, (to use his own words,) she was a Robber, that several years ago, one Barry an old man over 90 years of age, told him that his three fathers afore him knew of this wreck, and used to pick up beads of the same kind."—(Indeed I know a lady who 40 years ago picked up some,) "and that the cannons of this vessel may still be seen at very low water."—The cannons certainly are discernible at very low tides, and have been seen by several friends of my own. One day I ventured out on the rocks myself, to get a peep at them, and I distinctly saw two long cylinder like objects, lying side by side, about 9 feet under water. It was unfortunately but a passing glance for the tide suddenly returning, caused a fluttering of the waves, and I lost sight of them. If the story of this shipwreck be correct, and if this was the vessel that had the beads on board, the opinion of Mr. Vaux, as to their date and origin, may be correct, and his conjecture as to their having been stranded from some shipwreck, well founded. And that such a tradition may not be wholly without foundation, and that some Eastern Pirate may have been wrecked there, is probable from the following circumstance related by Smith, in his History of Cork, vol. 1, page 278 to 280, edt. 1750, under the head of Baltimore, and it

was this circumstance which I alluded to, as having caused me to think the articles may not be of more remote date than 1600.

"On the 20th June, 1631, a most terrible disaster happened this colony. In the dead of the night two Algerine rovers landed their men, and having plundered the place, (Baltimore,) they made a great number of the inhabitants prisoners, and carried them to Algiers:" and in a note he adds: "The Lord President St. Leger, in a letter to the Lords Justices, gives the following account of the precautions he took to secure the coast against the Turkish Pirates:—"I have ordered beacons to be set up on the following headlands and eminences; one at Dundeedy and Dunworly, to alarm the inhabitants of Ibawne, who upon the firing of the beacon's are to assemble at Cloghnakilty, so that if either Ross or Timoleague are attempted they may readily relieve them."

With regard to the antiquity of beads, I find from various accounts, that there are no objects of antiquity, which while they present so distinct a character, are so difficult to assign to a precise period. In the Archæologia we read that there is abundant evidence that the fabrication of glass is of remote antiquity. Without calling in question the authenticity of specimens of Egyptian

beads, said to be as old as the period of the Exodus, we may safely infer that the λιθινα χυτα mentioned by Herodotus,* as appended to the ears of the sacred crocodile in Egypt, were objects formed in a similar manner to the vitrified pastes in beads of various ages.—And though beads were frequently discovered in Anglo-Saxon and Irish barrows, yet these very beads may be assigned to a period anterior to the spread of Christianity amongst Saxons and others.—We cannot infer that they date from the century of the interment.—Many Pagan superstitions then remained, and the talismanic character of beads was fully recognised. It may be added that the art of combining glass of various colours is an early discovery, and hence the formation of parti-coloured beads.—My beads are now told, and I trust that I will soon be able to leave in good hands the exact interpretation of the inscription.

Since I read the foregoing paper at the meeting of the Cork Cuvierian Society, I have been to London, and exhibited the beads themselves to Mr. Akerman, fellow of the Society of Antiquaries, Mr. Vaux, of the British Museum, and other

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* κροκοδειλον.....αρτηματα τε λιθινα χυτα και χρυσεα ες τα ωτα εσθεντες.

Herodotus Euterpe, lib. 2, cap. 69.

antiquarian friends in London, but as yet the inscription on the cylinder has baffled every effort to decypher it.—Mr. Sainthill has kindly sent one of the lithographs and an electrotype of the inscribed cylinder to Rev. Dr. Bandinel, librarian of the celebrated Bodleian library in Oxford, from whom we are in daily hopes of some interpretation.

Perhaps I should have stated that in one of my letters to Mr. Vaux, I asked if it were possible that these beads could have been from any Irish barrow which might formerly have stood on the coast, but which by the encroachment of the sea had ultimately disappeared.—I now allude to this circumstance as the rath or fort at Dunworly, is now all but undermined by such an encroachment.*

The following is curious from Smith, vol. 1, page 256.

"Near Dunworly strand is a spring, called St. Anne's well, visited by the superstitious Irish on her festival. To the west the coast is all a bold high shore, abounding with stupendous cliffs, which astonish while they please us. The vast

* It has been stated that human bones and skeletons protruded some years ago from this fort: but owing to its having been so much undermined by the sea, these are no longer visible, having long since fallen in

expanse of the ocean adds to the grandeur of the scene; there is no object affects the mind so much, for one cannot see the heavings of it, even in a calm, without a pleasing astonishment; but when it is worked up by a tempest, so that the horizon seems to be nothing but foaming billows, and floating mountains, it is impossible to describe the agreeable horror that arises on such a prospect."

I think it right to insert the following letters which I received during my search, the first from Richard Caulfield, Esq. A. B., Member of the Society of Antiquaries of Normandy, the second from Mr. Vaux, of the British Museum.

Cork, October, 9th 1857.

My Dear Doctor,

I herewith enclose a tracing of Dunworly Bay, which I have just taken from the Ordnance Map,—though not very finely executed, you may depend upon its accuracy.—It would be well while you are on the spot to mark the exact place where the Beads were found on its tracing, as it would be well afterwards to compare it with the map itself, when some idea might suggest itself.—I will be writing to Nichols this week and will mention your extraordinary find, which I consider the most important and interesting that has hitherto occurred in the County.

I remain,

Most sincerely your's,

RICHARD CAULFIELD,

P. S.—It would also be of importance to make a note of the sunken vessels if within the range of the part traced.

British Museum, November 26th, 1857.

My Dear Sir,

I regret that the additional impressions that you have sent to me, have not enabled me to throw any light on the meaning of the Legends.—I still adhere to my opinion, that the characters are Arabic—and not of remote antiquity,—but they are so small and so much alike, that at present I cannot pretend to decypher any entire word.—The only way will be to collect as many specimens as possible,—and I have then no doubt that they will be ultimately read.—If you were to make a very nice impression of them in *Gutta percha*, you can then have the *gutta percha* electrotyped—and you can use the electrotype so made to print from,—of course such a piece of copper is not very strong, but it is strong enough to admit of 100 or more impressions—and of course thereby you get a facsimile of your inscription.

I am, my dear Sir,

Very faithfully your's

WM. S. W. VAUX.

The Rev. Dr. Neligan, Cork.

In compliance with the suggestion above given, I got electrotypes of the inscription, but the lithograph of the inscribed cylinder is so excellent a fac-simile that they have not been used in the printing.

While this sheet was in the press I received from some friends at Dunworly, about 80 blue beads, a few coloured ones, and some black, red, and also blue cylinders; among the latter are two fragments having very distinct portions of inscriptions.

In conclusion, I have only to state that it is a curious fact that glass of which the origin is assigned by all writers, from the time of Pliny, to Phœnician mariners, may be seen among Egyptian relics of great antiquity. Sir Gardiner Wilkinson discovered minute representations of glass-blowing painted on tombs, pertaining to the era of Orsirtasin the First, at least sixteen hundred years before the time of Pliny. Captain Hervey found a glass bead inscribed with the name of one of Egypt's Kings, who lived Sixteen hundred years before Christ, the specific gravity of which is precisely that of English crown glass.

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